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C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 001698

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PHUM PGOV KJUS GT

SUBJECT: INCREASED POLICE PROTECTION FOR ANTHROPOLOGISTS,
ENVIRONMENTALISTS

REF: GUATEMALA 1548

Classified By: POLOFF Robert E. Copley for reasons 1.5 (b).

¶1. (C) Summary: In response to increased threats targeting forensic anthropologists conducting exhumations, Ambassador Hamilton met with Minister of Interior Reyes Calderon on June 27 to press for an enhanced GOG response. Reyes Calderon said he had already given orders in the case of the anthropologists working in the Rabinal area after election-related violence there (reftel) and volunteered that he had detailed protection to CONAP, Guatemala's environmental protection agency, after police officers were caught in the Peten stealing tropical hardwoods. Until the GOG aggressively pursues those making the threats, however, there will always be more individuals threatened than there is protection available for them. End Summary.

¶2. (C) In a June 27 meeting, the Ambassador informed Minister of Interior Jose Reyes Calderon of the increasing threats against forensic anthropologists conducting exhumations in Rabinal, Baja Verapaz. The Ambassador told Reyes Calderon about a recent threat against Fredy Peccerelli, head of the anthropologist team, which was communicated to the boyfriend of Peccerelli's sister and pointed out that although Peccerelli and his immediate family have protection, the boyfriend did not and would be the next to "suffer" if the exhumations continue. Reyes Calderon assured the Ambassador that his Ministry took these threats very seriously, but said the Ministry could not provide round-the-clock protection to everyone related to anyone involved in the exhumations. He added that due to increased tensions in Rabinal, he had already given orders to find additional resources to devote to protecting the anthropologists.

¶3. (C) Reyes Calderon also told the Ambassador that in response to concerns from CONAP, he had ordered protection for the CONAP warehouse in the Peten where evidence against two police officers was being stored after they were arrested transporting stolen tropical hardwood in a police vehicle. Reyes Calderon said he had spoken with CONAP Director, a personal friend, and concluded that the safety of the evidence and the CONAP personnel in Peten were at risk.

¶4. (C) Comment: Reyes Calderon admitted that criminal elements who are determined to intimidate those who stand in their way can easily identify victims that fall outside the limited ability of the police to provide protection. Although he has been responsive in directing police protection toward threats we identify, Reyes Calderon has been less successful in investigating those who make the threats. These new cases illustrate the need for CICIACS or a similar outside investigative entity that can do more than redirect protective resources which are spread increasingly thin.
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